



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

HANDICRAFT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE value of the manual element in modern educational methods is not questioned by those who have given the subject even a small amount of study. With the most enthusiastic advocates of hand-training the subject has become almost a religion, their ideal an idol. And the ideals differ so much and are so many that there seems danger of a return to the days of pantheism. We are all, however, either consciously or unconsciously, struggling toward the same truth—simplicity. The path may be found somewhere between the indifferentism of the skeptic and the too ardent worship of the fanatic—and a “little child may lead us.”

In their devotion to educational “methods,” psychology, and child-study, teachers have been in danger of forgetting the child and forcing upon him the results of theories, ignoring the all-potent factor of personal interest. Now that a reaction has come, there are to be found those who say it is only the pleasure of the child which is considered, and there is no education in it. One would like to ignore all such criticism and wait for the future to vindicate the position of present methods. But if one is connected with the public schools, the public must have a reason for the service rendered. It is even necessary to assent to the fact that manual training is a fine thing, because it will make boys handy about the house and able to mend things, and possibly earn a little money; while all the time the teacher knows in his heart that all that is of no importance compared to the power which the boy is gaining—power to control himself and to bend to his will inanimate things. The ability to do things gives a consciousness of power and a self-poise that would never come with any amount of purely mental work. One of the best arguments I ever heard in favor of manual training came from a boy of ten who was struggling with a basket. After a hard fight in silence he announced: “This is fine work for the temper.” He was not noted for patience or perseverance, but he wanted that basket, and

he kept at it until he had finished it. Who is not willing to admit that he learned more than how to make a basket?

Knowing that all who are trying to solve the problem of suitable industrial work are anxious for help of a practical nature, I will give a few statements of what has been accomplished in our schools. Forty-five minutes each week is devoted to the industrial work. The work of the first four grades is under the direction of our primary supervisor, Miss Holton, and consists of paper-folding and weaving — rug- and hammock-weaving — mats, and very simple baskets of rattan and raffia. The plan of work has been changed somewhat each year since its introduction — always in the direction of simplicity. At first the designs given were too difficult, requiring too much assistance from the teacher. The child cares more for the finished product if it is the result of his own unaided effort, even though the object be far less valuable intrinsically. And it matters little what is done, but much how it is done. The foundation for appreciation of good form, good proportion, design, and color, may be laid by the teacher, whatever the object constructed. If it be some very simple, useful object, so much the better, as it is with that class of objects that our lives are mostly concerned. We have too long restricted beauty to exceptional places.

In the making of our Christmas tokens the youngest children are guided toward simplicity — are taught the dignity of straight line in construction and decoration, and guarded against tawdriness of all kinds. Here the taste of the teacher shows forth conspicuously, and we realize the truth of the fact that the personality of the teacher is more important than the subject taught. In the large city, where the supervisor must necessarily be but an occasional visitor in the schoolroom, the grade teacher has ample opportunity to exercise her own individuality, working out in her own way the suggestions given in the monthly teachers' meetings.

We try to make the drawing and industrial work mutually helpful. The seventh-grade children have found great pleasure in making basket designs for the fourth grade to use. The time for industrial work during the first term of the fourth year is spent in making a round mat of raffia and rattan using the "tied

stitch." This mat is from four to six inches in diameter, the size depending upon the amount of work the child can complete in the allotted time. While doing this the stitch is learned, facility in handling the material is acquired, and a simple pattern is introduced. During the second term the mat repeated serves for the bottom of a basket, and only the turning up of the sides and adapting the pattern to the shape has to be conquered. As such little children cannot adapt a pattern with any degree of accuracy, it was necessary for the teacher to plan each basket. The children of the seventh grade were quite capable of working out many patterns to scale, and we now have on hand an abundance of good material. A burden has been lifted from the shoulders of the fourth-grade teachers and a friendly interest aroused among the children. The small rugs woven in the second grade have been sewed together by the older children to form large floor rugs of excellent design and color; and in many other ways the spirit of co-operation helps to make the work attractive. Our fifth and sixth grades are without hand-work at present, the wood-work having been dropped several years ago for lack of funds. We hope soon—very soon—to find something to fill this vacancy. In the seventh and eighth grades the bench-work and cooking have been reinstated.

One building in each of our four school districts is equipped with kitchen and shop, and the classes from other buildings come in turn. The work is at present optional, but the overflowing classes prove its popularity. Each shop has its special teacher; the supervisor of manual training directs the work of the grades as well as that of the four high schools.

In these high-school workshops such things happen as would make the "average citizen" marvel—beautiful chests and chairs, tables and tall clocks, and a hundred other things useful and ornamental.

Each completed object is the result of co-operation in the various departments. Designs are made in the drawing-room, wood-work done in the shop, and the article returned to the studio for decoration. Color schemes are most carefully selected from the large amount of suggestive material gathered by the

teacher. Designs are made from the pupil's own drawings or adapted from reproductions of good work. All this requires an endless collecting of photographs and clippings and magazines, and eternal vigilance on the part of the special teachers. For it is their constant aim that the work, though sometimes imperfect, shall always tend toward the best.

This continued effort to lift the standard of appreciation in the child-world must surely bring forth fruit in the future; and perhaps we may some day see the hideous, overdecorated stuff which now fills many of our stores give place to simple, dignified things. The day may be long in coming, but the dawn seems already near when we look back a decade. "Artistic" used to be a synonym for "expensive," as only imported fabrics gave the refined color and good design which the cultivated taste demanded. Now, money value has little to do with the choice, for our own manufacturers, feeling the trend of the market, have given us many things almost, if not quite, equal to the products of the older civilization. May we not hope that the efforts of the public-school "art director" have to a small extent helped in this development? We plant the seed and water it with faith; it may grow and bear fruit, even though we be not there to see. But it rests with us to see that the seed sown is capable of producing good fruit. The responsibility seems very great when we think of the thousands of homes represented by the children under our care, and note how readily these same children receive an impression, and how exactly they reflect the ideals of the teacher.

On the other hand, should it not give us hope and courage for the future to know that the best representatives of art in all its phases are each year becoming more and more interested in the public-school problem, and realizing that through this very army of children we must conquer and make a place for ourselves among the artistic nations of the world? That much progress has already been made is evidenced in no way more than by the kind of hand-work which is being introduced everywhere. No more flimsy paper articles without use or beauty; no more exercises in sewing or wood-work merely for the sake of the exercise. The inevitable question of the child, "What can we do with it?"

may be answered in a way entirely satisfactory to his practical soul. Any number of "exercises" may be mastered while putting them to legitimate use.

That this substitution of individual work for class work greatly increases the number of details which must be attended to by the teacher is to be regretted, but the gain to the pupil is very great.

There are many other opportunities, besides the making of articles, where the teacher may influence the taste of the student, at least in our city. It is the custom of outgoing classes in the high schools, eighth grades, and sometimes in seventh, to place a memorial in the building which they are leaving. Many times this takes the form of a picture, but frequently other decorative objects are selected—tables, bookcases, and in several instances tall clocks. In each case a committee from the class—usually accompanied by the teacher—makes a tour of the shops, and they have an experience which cannot but influence their future purchases for home. The dealers are finding them excellent judges—they know the "Mission," "Colonial," or "Stickley" styles, and the difference between varnish and hand finish. Recently a speaker on art appreciation made the suggestion that ugly school-rooms might be responsible for the bad boy, or at least beautiful surroundings might unconsciously influence him for good. The audience laughed, but may there not be a deep truth buried there? Scientists are telling us wonderful things of the effect of color, for instance, upon different temperaments. Certainly a room with softly tinted walls, with a few good pictures and well-selected articles of furniture, would be more restful and conducive to study than some overdecorated or utterly barren rooms which we can all recall.

"Simplicity" and "honesty" are the two watchwords which lead the way to all beauty. They should be our guides in all things, but in nothing more than in the choice of hand-work which we put into our public schools. A simple article, well constructed, well made by the child's own hands, will give him a respect for honest workmanship to be gained in no other way—a respect much needed in all climes, but nowhere more than in this

country of ours, where machinery seems to be leaving the hand-worker far behind in the race.

Of course, it is understood that we do not expect to make artisans of all the school children, any more than we wish to make painters of them; but we do hope to help in the making of men and women who will appreciate the good things in the world about them—who will be able to discriminate between the good and bad, and in all ways lend their influence toward the uplifting of the world's standard.

M. EMMA ROBERTS.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAWING,
Minneapolis, Minn.